

The House of the Purple Stairs

A Mystery Story with a Wholly New Twist.

By JEANNETTE L. HELM

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

John Gordon, a young lawyer, called the Wetheralls to his home one night to see the old woman who had been found dead in the house of the purple stairs. He had been told that the old woman had been found dead in the house of the purple stairs. He had been told that the old woman had been found dead in the house of the purple stairs.

CHAPTER III.

Enter Mr. Quinn.

"Quite right, Mr. Gordon; quite right. So you know the young lady is innocent? That is interesting, very. Would you mind telling me how you know it?"

Gordon felt the dull color mounting to his cheek bones, and a spark of light flashed in his eyes that promised little good to his questioner. But Quinn's apparently innocent question had struck on the weak spot of Gordon's knowledge that to show anger would be to acknowledge uncertainty. So he only answered, half contemptuously:

"I shall give you chance to find that out for yourself, Mr. Quinn. It would be a pity for you to come all this distance without having an opportunity of exercising your talents."

"Thank you, Mr. Gordon," the other answered, almost humbly. "I shall certainly avail myself of the opportunity."

Gordon regretted his anger and the hasty speech it had forced him into almost as soon as it was over; the more so because Quinn showed no outward sign of resenting it. He was not deceived by that last fact. Quinn was a man who never forgot or forgave, and it had been unwise to anticipate trouble.

He would have regretted it still more if, after a few more perfunctory questions the detective left him, he had seen him slip quietly into the back part of the house in search of Martha; and the smile on the little man's face as he jotted down her statements would have warned him of new dangers ahead.

His thoughts were unpleasant enough, however, as he sat there watching the hot sun dip behind the line of blue hills across the river. So far nothing had been done to clear Bertha, and the presence of the other detective convinced him that to any extent he hardly liked to acknowledge.

Rollins was clever, and he trusted greatly in him; but he had not had time to get into the matter, and the only clue they had unearthed thus far had led to a blank wall.

The more Gordon thought it over the more important it seemed to the tramp to be found. But how? He had apparently vanished into space. Where on earth could he be?

The sound of a rattling gravel made him look up quickly, expecting to see Bertha; but it was only old Jerry coming slowly along the path, watering can in hand. With a sudden new idea Gordon leaned forward and spoke:

"Good evening, Jerry. Can I have a word with you?"

The old man blinked at him suspiciously for an instant.

"Oh, it's Mr. Gordon. I thought you was one of them detectives who's been a peep round and asking questions all day. Precious lot they got out of me, I tell you. I know what I know, but I'm not a tellin' every one."

"You're dead right, Jerry," laughed Gordon. "I know from what I know of you it would be a clever and a detective who'd be able to get more out of you than you wanted to let by, but as I'm not a detective, and I'm sure you're as anxious to keep your secrets as I am, I'll let you go."

"Jerry put down his water pot and said:

"He's a snappet! Miss Bertha!" he croaked. "I heard somethin' of it in the village, but I just laughed at them. The idea of her doin' such a thing as that! Heavens, I've known since she was a little shaver!"

His indignation choked him and he stopped, speechless.

"That's the way, fool too, Jerry," returned Gordon. "And I'm going to do my best to make other people feel the same way. But maybe it won't be so much for them as for you. Most folks don't think a sight of an old man's ideas."

Gordon saw that he wanted on encouragement and proceeded to supply it.

"Come now; you know very well you're smarter than most, Jerry. I'd like to have your opinion on what I've told you. What do you think of it?"

The old man coughed importantly and looked around with exaggerated caution.

"Some folks say as how Miss Bertha done it; but I know better than that; and some folks thinks 'twas the shaver."

He paused dramatically.

"Oh," said Gordon disappointedly. "I remember you said you thought Mrs. Wetherall had seen 'Her'—only how about the pin in her heart?"

"That's just what I'm getting at," returned Jerry sentimentally. "Ghosts can't kill with human weapons, but there are black devils in human form that can!"

Again he stopped and looked around. A faint shiver passed over the young man in spite of his conviction of its absurdity.

"What do you mean?" he demanded quickly.

"I ain't accusin' anybody, mind you; but the person that killed the poor old lady had a black devil, and it wasn't in a human shape."

"You can't mean—Miss Bertha?" Gordon's voice was sharp-edged.

"No, sir. I'd as soon suspect my old woman, as I'd suspect a black devil. But what I do mean is this: that what did the old man by tellin' all kinds of tales to the rest of the girls about devils, and black devils creepin' down stairs, and her bein' so scared to be near the place after dark; and then standin' there on the very spot talkin' to a strange man when she was so afraid to be gone along with the other servants?"

Then his mind quickly seizing an inference from the confused jumble of the old man's words: "Do you mean Martha Jenkins?"

Jerry nodded portentously.

"Done she, Mr. Gordon. I seed her myself."

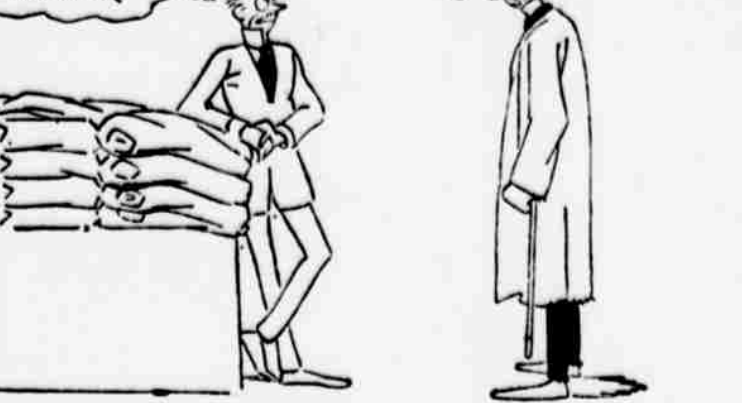
Why Not?

Copyright, 1916, by The Evening World.

By Maurice Ketten

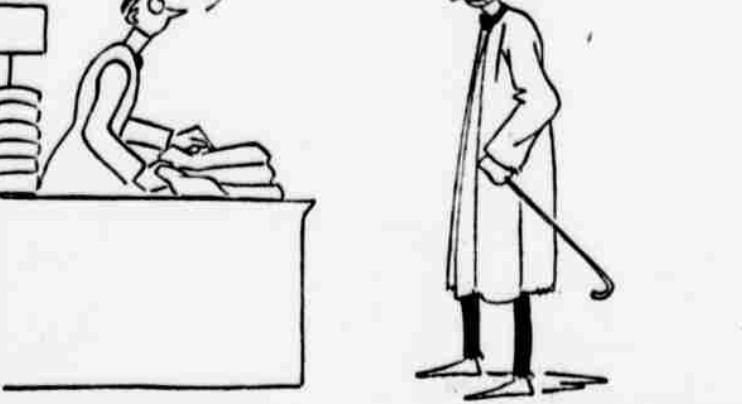
YES SIR, CLOTHES HAD GONE UP ON GUNGE UP ON THE WAR.

WELL I WON'T BUY ANY NEW CLOTHES THEN.



YES SIR, MATERIALS FOR SHIRTS HAVE GONE UP FIFTY PER CENT.

WELL I WON'T BUY ANY NEW SHIRTS THEN.



YES SIR, RAZORS, SOAPS AND PERFUMES HAVE GONE UP.

WELL I WON'T WASH OR SHAVE THEN.



"What is it?" she asked with equal eagerness.

He repeated what Jerry had told him, and added:

"Have you ever had any reason to distrust that man?"

"I never trusted her. She was always repellent to me somehow; I know she didn't like me, and I often feared that she would do me harm. She was a good servant in other ways, and my aunt relied on her a great deal."

"Since my father died, she married some sort of worthless man, I know. He was a real human voice and one I'd been lately. I knelt down on the floor and ended the door open a crack. Then I heard a voice coming in. I let it allow it. Martha, it said; and then I knew who the woman was—Martha Jenkins!"

He paused, and taking a plug of tobacco from his pocket, carefully bit off a large mouthful.

"The old man's sake go on, Jerry," exclaimed Gordon. "What happened then?"

"Well, sir, it was lucky I was so stupefied; for if I had run off I'd never have seen what followed. The black finger began to talk again, and some how the voice sounded familiar. That kind of staided me, for it was a real human voice and one I'd been lately. I knelt down on the floor and ended the door open a crack. Then I heard a voice coming in. I let it allow it. Martha, it said; and then I knew who the woman was—Martha Jenkins!"

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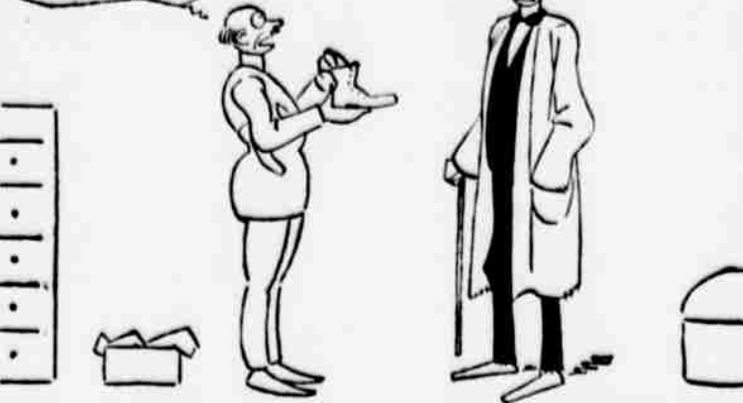
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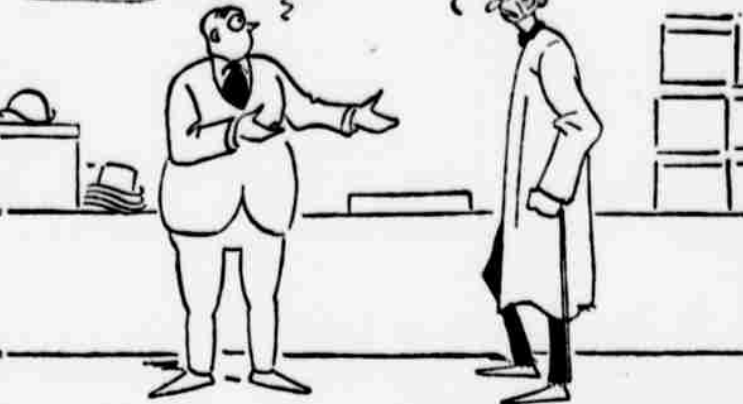
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ALLRIGHT I WON'T BUY ANY NEW SHOES THEN.



YES SIR, HATS, TIES AND GLOVES HAVE GONE UP TWO HUNDRED PER CENT.

WELL I WON'T BUY ANY THEN.



YES SIR, RAZORS, SOAPS AND PERFUMES HAVE GONE UP.

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If you were lost in the Canadian woods and a gloriously beautiful girl should happen along—

Well, that is the situation confronting the hero of

LURA OF THE NORTHLAND

By ROBERT E. PINKERTON

NEXT WEEK'S COMPLETE NOVEL IN THE EVENING WORLD

This is a story of the Big Outdoors—just the sort to read in springtime.

There is plenty of adventure and mystery in it and a goodly portion of somewhat unusual love interest.

derstand the conclusion to which I

of this act, he would have been

struck by its gruesomeness.

What was she looking for, and why

did these impatient little sighs shake

her at intervals like this? Looking over

As he questioned his mind for a solu-

tion, the girl picked up a little

white packet and held it for a mo-

ment irresolutely before putting it

down. But I know and pray that I

may be wrong and that my dear

niece may be fully acquitted. You

can count on me to do everything in

my power to assist her.

He got up wearily. "You will pardon

me if I retire now? I am very

tired, and the events of the last two

days have shaken me greatly. I shall

be back in the morning. He opened

one and found it was filled with a

white crystal-like powder.

He would have replaced them if a

half-memory that had been troubling

him had not flashed back at that in-

stant.

Where had he seen paper just like

this with the same creases and folds

—only this time the creases were

the question came the answer—the

stairs the night he had stooped for

the piece of paper and so escaped

being brained by a bullet.

That slip of paper was identical

with the one he now held in his hand

—that he could swear.

He did not stop to reason out the

possible significance of the fact, but

slipped the whole package into his

pocket.

Bertha was standing now in the

center of the room, her hands clasped

together, her face pale and un-

smiling. "Where is it? Where

have I put it?"

He was afraid of waking her, but

he risked the former, and

coming close to her said soothingly,

"What is it, Miss Bertha? Let me

find it for you."

She looked at him unseeing, but

the tones of his voice seemed to have

gone straight to her heart. She allowed

him to slip his arm under hers gently

and lead her back to her own room.

He listened outside the door for several

minutes, but he could not hear the

creaking of the bed as she moved

about, and presently her soft, even breathing

came to him.

He had a half idea of going back

to the entry, but he knew that the

search for the package was not over

until he had found it. He moved

therefore, and he was not long in

finding it. He was in the room of the

young man, where he undressed

and went to bed. He was not long

in falling asleep, and he was not

long in waking up. He was not long

in finding the package. He was not

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